

From "Readings on Romans" by C. Crain. pp.39-43.

THE CHARACTER OF CHAPTERS 5:12 - 8:30

We have seen [in ch. 1-4] that not only is salvation from wrath the assured portion of those who are justified by God on the ground of the atoning sacrifice of Christ, but that they live by and in the living and risen One. We have also seen that the power of resurrection which has already been applied to the body of our blessed Lord, in its due season will be applied to the bodies of the justified [v.10]. Our salvation will not be a fully completed salvation until this is done. But such a salvation is assured to the justified.

If, then, there is power in Christ, the living, risen Christ, to conform the bodies of the justified (whether it be the mortal body or the dead body) to His own resurrection body, there must be power in Him to use the mortal body as a vessel for the display of this life: there must be power in Him to produce practical holiness in those who have life in Him. Nothing in the life, walk and service of the justified that is not produced by Him can be fruitfulness for God.

The living, risen Christ, then is the power of practical deliverance from the power of sin still dwelling in the bodies of the justified. This practical salvation from the power of indwelling sin is involved and included in the expression, in verse 10 of chap. 5, "We shall be saved by His life."

Now, before we proceed with the epistle, [5:12 onward] it is important that this should be clearly understood. **From this point on it is not a question of how a guilty sinner can be saved from the necessity of having to stand before God, to be judged for his sins – the deeds done in his body, but it is a question of how a person – who has already been saved from that dreadful necessity – can be saved from the present dominion of the sin that dwells in him.** It is not a salvation from a future judgment of sins that is being considered, but a day by day salvation from a power that is realized to be ever inwardly present. Sin dwells in the mortal body, how can it be nullified? That is the great question. How can the tyranny of sin dwelling in the body be overcome? Can practical deliverance from the dominion of indwelling sin be realized?

Here many serious and fatal mistakes have been made. Many, not realizing that the living, risen Christ is the power of deliverance, have sought to curb the activities of indwelling sin. They have endeavored to resist it and fight it down. With many the conclusion has been accepted that it is not only a hopeless struggle, but that they have no resource. They say, "We must go on in sin." They abandon the struggle and give up the very idea of ever in this life realizing deliverance from the power of sin. They reason that under grace it is permissible to continue in sin. Some carry the argument so far that they

justify continuing in sin on the ground that the grace of God abounds by it. It is an unholy argument – a shocking abuse of grace.

Another mistake, often made, is that the struggle with indwelling sin, to repress and overcome it, is the normal Christian experience. They consider that the struggle and the exercises connected with it are the sure proofs of being a Christian. They would look upon one who has found deliverance, and lives in the sense and joy of it, as being presumptuous and treading on very dangerous ground. With them the cry, voiced by the apostle, where he says, "O wretched man that I am," is the very acme of Christian attainment. They, too, thus give up the idea of deliverance from the power of indwelling sin.

Others again consider that the struggle with the inward evil indicates that the Holy Spirit has not been received. Some of those who hold this view contend that we must die to sin. They constantly urge upon us that we must crucify self, that we must persist in the process of self-crucifixion until we have succeeded in eliminating the inward evil altogether. They argue that the Holy Spirit and sin cannot dwell together, that the body must be made a holy body – a sinless body, before the Holy Spirit can come into it to make it His habitation. Some, a few, have persuaded themselves that they have been successful in their efforts to destroy self, and that, in their cases, the mortal body has actually become a sinless body. Many more are struggling hard to attain that result.

But there are others who would strenuously refuse such teaching as I have been referring to, who yet hold that the Holy Spirit does not indwell the body of one who has not learned or apprehended what is the real power of deliverance from the reign of the indwelling sin. According to their view the believer, who is passing through the exercises and experiences which are described and explained in the portion of the epistle we are about to consider, is not yet in Christ. While they have a more or less clear understanding of the character of the exercises and experiences themselves, they yet regard the one who is passing through them as still "in the flesh." For them he is neither in Christ nor in the Spirit.

Now all these views, and others, more or less akin to them, are erroneous. The section of the epistle that is now to be before us fully answers them. To enter intelligently on the study of it, it is needful to mark the character of it as distinguished from that of the section we have already reviewed. In this no question of the sinful nature inherent in all men was raised. There is no guilt attaching to the children of Adam for having a fallen, sinful nature. They are not responsible for it, will not be judged for it at the great white throne. They are, however, responsible for allowing it to act. Guilt attaches to the *allowing* the acts. It is for the deeds done in the body men are responsible. This is what constitutes them guilty. It is their guilt – the

deeds done – that they will have to face and be judged for at the great white throne.

We have already seen that what characterizes that part of the epistle [ch. 1 - 5:11] we have gone over is the ground and principle on which **God gratuitously and righteously delivers a guilty man from the necessity of being judged for what he is guilty of, from having to endure the eternal penalty of his sins.**

Nothing of this is found in the next part [5:12 onward] of the epistle. The wrath of God, as the deserved due of sins, is not contemplated here. It is not this that causes the exercises and experiences that are described. We are not in any way occupied with a soul that is fearing the judgement of the great white throne and is seeking deliverance from it. This has been fully considered in the previous chapters, and **peace with God established on a secure basis.**

But what we find here is a soul that, having deliverance from eternal judgment, and being so in the sense of the love of God in providing such a deliverance for him, **earnestly wants now to live for God.** He wants to serve God in a life of holiness. He wants his life now henceforth to be one of fruitfulness for God. Hitherto his body has been a vessel for the use of sin, for Satan's use, now he wants to be a vessel for the use of God.

But with these desires, purposes, aims, longings and aspirations, he finds in himself a power that hinders him from realizing what he so ardently desires. By this power—the power of evil within him, an indwelling, fallen, sinful nature—he is turned from normal Christian occupation (the enjoyment of Christ) to self-occupation and introspection. He longs to be delivered from this power. He feels what terrible bondage it is to be so helpless under a power which, the more he struggles against it, the more miserable he gets. It is a wretched condition to be in. The exceedingly sinful thing that is in him, his fallen, sinful nature, seems to be triumphant. It is reigning in his body.

Is there a power that is greater than this power of indwelling sin?—a power equal to the deliverance out of this wretched self-occupation and miserable introspection? —power of sufficient energy to produce holiness notwithstanding an ever-present sinful

nature?—to produce fruit for God, to use the body as a vessel for the display of the life of the risen Christ, though sin still dwells in it?

Yes, thank God, there *is* such a power. Only it needs that we be turned to the place where it is to find it, and be conscious of its workings. It is this need that the second part of Romans meets and provides for. It turns us to the place where the power for living the life of Christ practically is to be found. To be occupied with it *there* is to be practically under the delivering power, and practically delivered from the power of indwelling sin.

This part of the epistle, then, answers the question, Where do the justified find power to live practically by Christ? Where do they find power to display the life of the risen Christ in their mortal bodies?

We shall now turn to it to follow the apostle's discussion of the question. May the blessed Spirit guide us in doing so. And may we be helped to a fuller and deeper apprehension of the deliverance that the God who righteously justifies the sinner that believes, has provided for the justified to enjoy.

The blessings which grace bestows along with justification by faith are all, as we have seen, through our Lord Jesus Christ. Now this suggests the idea of many being involved by the act of one, and sharing the results of that act. Possibly the thought was before the apostle's mind as an objection raised by some to his teaching. At all events, he fully indorses the idea. If the word “wherefore” is changed to the expression, “with reference to this” (which is really the force of the words in the original), the meaning is made more simple. Thus the apostle's argument is: With regard to the justified being involved in the work of the Lord Jesus Christ and sharing in its results, it is the same as it is with sin and death coming into the world by one man. ...

From “Readings on Romans” by C. Crain. pp.39-45.

Extracted by Ron Canner July 27, 2005.

Notes in [brackets] mine.

Emphases marked by **bold** mine.

Italics his.